

What is claimed is:

1. An information providing apparatus comprising:

a first authentication means for authenticating a first information processing unit;

a second authentication means for authenticating a second information processing unit;

a reception control means for controlling the reception of a transmission request for data for identifying said second information processing unit and a key from said first information processing unit;

a communication control means for controlling the communication such that a transmission request for said key on the basis of said data for identifying said second information processing unit is sent to said second information processing unit and said key is received from said second information processing unit; and

a transmission control means for controlling the transmission of said key to said first information processing unit.

2. The information providing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first information processing unit is a portable device and said second information processing unit is a key server.

3. The information providing apparatus according to

claim 1, wherein said data and said key are for use in making contents data available.

4. The information providing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said information providing apparatus functions as an authentication server having a key management program and a license management program.

5. The information providing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said key management program and said license management program are included in a server licensed compliant module.

6. The information providing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said first information processing unit is a personal computer and, if said authentication server is unavailable, has a licensed compliant module that executes generally the same processing as an ordinary licensed compliant module.

7. The information providing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said license management program has a server authentication program and a portable device authentication program.

8. An information providing method comprising the steps of:

authenticating a first information processing unit;  
authenticating a second information processing

unit;

controlling the reception of a transmission request for data for identifying said second information processing unit and a key from said first information processing unit;

controlling the communication such that a transmission request for said key on the basis of said data for identifying said second information processing unit is sent to said second information processing unit and said key is received from said second information processing unit; and

controlling the transmission of said key to said first information processing unit.

9. The information providing method according to claim 8, wherein said first information processing unit is a portable device and said second information processing unit is a key server.

10. The information providing method according to claim 8, wherein said data and said key are for use in making contents data available.

11. The information providing method according to claim 8, wherein said information providing apparatus functions as an authentication server having a key management program and a license management program.

12. The information providing method according to claim 11, wherein said key management program and said license management program are included in a server licensed compliant module.

13. The information providing method according to claim 11, wherein said first information processing unit is a personal computer and, if said authentication server is unavailable, has a licensed compliant module that executes generally the same processing as an ordinary licensed compliant module.

14. The information providing method according to claim 11, wherein said license management program has a server authentication program and a portable device authentication program.

15. A program storage medium storing a computer-readable program comprising the steps of:

authenticating a first information processing unit;

authenticating a second information processing unit;

controlling the reception of a transmission request for data for identifying said second information processing unit and a key from said first information processing unit;

controlling the communication such that a

transmission request for said key on the basis of said data for identifying said second information processing unit is sent to said second information processing unit and said key is received from said second information processing unit; and

controlling the transmission of said key to said first information processing unit.

16. An information processing apparatus comprising:

an authentication means for authenticating a first information providing unit;

a transmission control means for controlling the transmission of a transmission request to said first information providing unit for data for identifying a second information providing unit that provides a key and said key; and

a reception control means for controlling the reception of said key provided and transmitted to said first information providing unit from said second information providing unit.

17. The information processing apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said first information providing unit is an authentication server and said second information providing unit is a key server.

18. The information processing apparatus according to

claim 16, wherein said data and said key are for use in making contents data available.

19. The information processing apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said first information providing unit functions as an authentication server having a key management program and a license management program.

20. The information processing apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said key management program and said license management program are included in a server licensed compliant module.

21. The information processing apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said information processing apparatus is constituted as a personal computer and, if said authentication server is unavailable, has a same licensed compliant module that executes generally the same processing as an ordinary licensed compliant module.

22. The information processing apparatus according to claim 20, wherein said information processing apparatus is constituted as a portable device and has a client licensed compliant module that executes cross-authentication in cooperation with said server licensed compliant module of said authentication server.

23. An information processing method comprising the steps of:

authenticating a first information providing unit;  
controlling the transmission of a transmission  
request to said first information providing unit for data  
for identifying a second information providing unit that  
provides a key and said key; and

controlling the reception of said key provided and  
transmitted to said first information providing unit from  
said second information providing unit.

24. The information processing method according to  
claim 23, wherein said first information providing unit  
is an authentication server and said second information  
providing unit is a key server.

25. The information processing method according to  
claim 23, wherein said data and said key are for use in  
making contents data available.

26. The information processing method according to  
claim 23, wherein said first information providing unit  
functions as an authentication server having a key  
management program and a license management program.

27. The information processing method according to  
claim 26, wherein said key management program and said  
license management program are included in a server  
licensed compliant module.

28. The information processing method according to

claim 27, wherein said information processing apparatus is constituted as a personal computer and, if said authentication server is unavailable, has a same licensed compliant module that executes generally the same processing as an ordinary licensed compliant module.

29. The information processing method according to claim 27, wherein said information processing apparatus is constituted as a portable device and has a client licensed compliant module that executes cross-authentication in cooperation with said server licensed compliant module of said authentication server.

30. A program storage medium storing a computer-readable program comprising the steps of:

    authenticating a first information providing unit;  
    controlling the transmission of a transmission request to said first information providing unit for data for identifying a second information providing unit that provides a key and said key; and

    controlling the reception of said key provided and transmitted to said first information providing unit from said second information providing unit.